

POLAR BEARS

& the Wildlife of Churchill, Canada

HMSC
HARVARD MUSEUMS OF
SCIENCE & CULTURE



October 16 - 22, 2016

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Almost every person who is fortunate enough to see a polar bear does so with the bear in captivity. However, in the remote grain port of Churchill, located on the west coast of Canada's Hudson Bay, a small group of people can experience the excitement of witnessing bears living freely in their own natural habitat!

Every fall, the tundra surrounding Churchill becomes a stopover for more than 1,000 bears on their annual migration to hunt for food on the frozen ice of the Hudson Bay. Large numbers of these usually solitary bears can be found in Churchill at this time of year, making it the "Polar Bear Capital of the World." From the safety of tundra vehicles, we can view these majestic creatures within close range. It is also common to see gyrfalcons, snowy owls, ptarmigans, and Arctic foxes. Our knowledgeable Expedition Leader will be on hand to talk about polar bear behavior, natural history and adaptations to the Arctic way of life.

During the day, young male bears play-fight, mothers cautiously explore with their cubs at their sides, and solitary adult bears lumber across the tundra. On this unique northern adventure, we will take a special evening trip in addition to our daytime excursions to observe nightfall on the pristine and isolated tundra landscape – an unforgettable experience. It is a rare opportunity to view the tundra at night, when the northern environs provide an eerie and remote adventure. If conditions are right, we may also be able to observe the aurora borealis, or northern lights, as radiating colors illuminate the night sky.

An increased awareness of the importance of protecting the bears, along with growing tourist interest in their yearly migration, has brought about a sense of commitment by the people of Churchill to help these mighty animals migrate safely through their now famous town. Please join us on this unforgettable Arctic journey to view polar bears in the wild!



POLAR BEARS

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Day 1: Arrive Winnipeg

Fly to Winnipeg, where a shuttle will meet you upon arrival and take you to the Fort Garry Hotel. Gather at 7pm for a welcome dinner and briefing. (D)

Day 2: Winnipeg/Churchill

Today, a flight takes us north to Churchill, on the western shore of Hudson Bay. After settling into our hotel that will be our base for the next four nights, spend the afternoon strolling around this hospitable town. At this time of year, Churchill is wholly focused on polar bears and the excitement of “bear season” is apparent everywhere! (B, L, D)

Days 3-5: Churchill

On two of these days, after a hearty breakfast, we will depart for all-day bear-viewing drives aboard our tundra vehicle. These unique vehicles were specially designed for tundra travel; in fact, their invention was the catalyst for the polar bear viewing opportunities that have captured the world’s attention and helped to protect the bears. The pace of our drive is dictated by the bear sightings. We may see many bears in a single day, or we may see just a few; the fascination of the experience is not in the quantity, but in the quality of the sightings. Sometimes we may linger for an hour or more to watch a single bear’s behavior before heading off in search of more bears. Throughout the day our naturalist guide will provide commentary on what we are observing. Lunch will be provided picnic-style aboard the tundra buggy. Return in the late afternoon to Churchill for dinner and an evening presentation.

On the day that we do not visit the tundra, we will have a tour of historic Churchill and

its surrounding environs. This evening we journey to the edge of town where we’ll board a tundra vehicle for our evening on the tundra – a night drive that begins at dusk and lasts until well after dark. Our knowledgeable driver and expert naturalist guide will keep a sharp lookout as we head towards an area where the polar bears frequently congregate. As we approach the bears, care is taken not to disturb them with the special lighting, which enables us to see them in the darkness. Watch, too, for the luminescent eyes of nocturnal animals such as the Arctic fox and snowy owl. Dinner will be served on board the vehicle, and there will be ample time to observe the bears before returning to Churchill for the night. (B, L, D)

Day 6: Churchill/Winnipeg

Our final morning in Churchill leaves us free time to explore town and gather souvenirs of our northern expedition. There will be time to explore the exhibits at the small but excellent Eskimo Museum and to visit the local shops and galleries that feature Inuit carvings and other Arctic arts and crafts. Later today, fly to Winnipeg and check into our hotel. Depending on which flight schedule we have, there will be either a farewell lunch in Churchill or a farewell dinner in Winnipeg. (B, L or D)

Day 7: Depart Winnipeg

Transfer by shuttle to the airport any time for your homebound flight. Hotel checkout time is noon. (B)

B=Breakfast L=Lunch D=Dinner

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Every autumn, more than one thousand polar bears congregate on the alpine tundra surrounding Hudson Bay, anticipating the winter freeze. Churchill's unique setting in this environment makes it the only place in the world where travelers can safely and comfortably view large numbers of wild polar bears in their natural habitat.

Our trip is scheduled during the peak season, which begins in early October and lasts until late November or December, when the bay freezes over and the bears migrate onto the pack ice. Daily sightings are impossible to predict and vary in number, but bears are always present. In past years we've seen as many as fifty bears in a day and other times only one.

We search for polar bears aboard a spacious bus-like vehicle mounted on huge all-terrain tires, following established routes as not to damage the fragile tundra. Vehicles travel at a leisurely pace to areas of high bear density, approximately a 45-minute drive. The dirt trails are rough and rocky in places, making for the occasional bumpy ride, but our drivers keep the speed down to minimize bouncing and maximize bear sightings. All vehicles are heated and have bathrooms. Passenger numbers are kept small to ensure optimal visibility from the indoor windows and to provide ample room on the open viewing deck.

In addition to a picnic lunch, hot and cold drinks are provided on board.

Temperatures during peak viewing season vary between 0° and 45° Fahrenheit. Conditions range from sunny and clear to snowy and overcast; windy days are common. Deep snow is unlikely, but Churchill's streets can be icy and slippery. Warm parkas and boots are available upon request; participants will receive details after registration. Our trip to the tundra does not require a high degree of physical fitness.

Hotel accommodations are first class in Winnipeg. Churchill's hotel rooms are less elegant but clean and comfortable with meals that are simple and hearty.

Please recognize that Churchill's resources are stretched to capacity this time of year, and as a result, flight changes, mechanical delays, and other similar issues are not uncommon. Participants are encouraged to be patient, flexible and respectful of the local infrastructure. For those who travel with a spirit of adventure, this tour is the experience of a lifetime!



Tour Cost

\$6,295 per person, based on double occupancy. Group size is limited to approximately 15 participants.

Tour Cost Includes

Trips to the tundra on specially designed tundra vehicles; all accommodations; all meals from dinner on Day 1 through breakfast on Day 7 (except either lunch or dinner on your final day in Churchill, depending on your flight schedule); services of Natural Habitat Adventure's (NHA) professional Expedition Leader and assistants; all ground transportation in Churchill and airport transfers in Winnipeg; roundtrip air transportation between Winnipeg and Churchill; permits and entrance fees; \$200,000 emergency medical and evacuation insurance; all taxes and service charges including Canada's GST.

Tour Cost Does Not Include

Roundtrip air transportation between your home city and Winnipeg; alcoholic beverages; lunch or dinner on your final day in Churchill; items of a personal nature (telephone calls, laundry, etc.); gratuities; and travel insurance.

Singles

For those travelers who would like single accommodations, an additional fee of \$950 is required. Single accommodations are limited, subject to availability at the time of booking and cannot be guaranteed. Should you wish to share a room, we will attempt to select a roommate for you at your request. If we are unable to provide a roommate within 45 days of departure, half the supplemental fee will be assessed.

Travel Insurance

We strongly suggest purchasing travel insurance. Information will be sent to you upon receipt of your reservation.

Helicopter Flights

On this trip, travelers also have the opportunity to participate in an optional helicopter journey. From the air, you may observe caribou, arctic fox and polar bears

located in areas where our tundra vehicles cannot travel. Participants will receive further information on helicopter flights approximately 60 days prior to departure.

Dog Sledding Excursion

A dog sledding excursion may be offered during your trip (weather dependent). If available, you will receive more information approximately 60 days prior to departure.

Extra Day in Winnipeg Program

For those travelers who would like to see as much as possible during their trip to this area of the world, we have arranged a guided Extra Day in Winnipeg Program that takes place prior to the Polar Bear program. Included are hotel accommodations, breakfast and lunch, a tour of the city highlighting historical and cultural points of interest and a guided visit to the acclaimed Manitoba Museum, winner of numerous awards of excellence in tourism and service. This program is \$260 per person, double occupancy, and \$315, single occupancy.



Air Transportation

We urge you to check airline cancellation penalties before purchasing airline tickets because international departure times

and flights can change. Tours can also be cancelled because of low enrollment. Neither Harvard Museum of Natural History nor NHA accepts liability for cancellation penalties related to domestic or international airline tickets purchased independently in conjunction with a tour.

Travel Documents

All U.S. citizens traveling via air or sea will require a valid passport to enter Canada. Please note that birth certificates and other government issued photo identification will no longer be accepted for entry.

RESERVATION FORM

Please reserve _____ place(s) on **Harvard Museums of Science & Culture Polar Bears of Churchill**, October 16-22, 2016.

Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Dietary Preference: Regular Vegetarian

Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Dietary Preference: Regular Vegetarian

*Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

*PLEASE NOTE: Travelers not living at the same address must fill out separate reservation forms.

Please call me to arrange air travel from my home city of: _____

Deposit Information:

\$500 per person.

Check enclosed, payable to Natural Habitat Adventures

VISA MasterCard Discover Card

Account #: _____ CW # _____ Exp Date: ____/____/____

Cardholder Name: _____

PLEASE NOTE: Your final payment will be charged to your credit card at 90 days prior to departure. Should you prefer to pay by check, you must indicate your preference below.

I will pay my final payment by check. Please do not charge my credit card for final payment.

Accommodations

____ Double (please provide name of accompanying person if not shown above):

____ Two beds (if available)

____ Single preferred (not guaranteed) with single supplement of \$950

____ Single, wishing to share (not guaranteed) with ____ smoker ____ non-smoker

HMSC Membership

The museum's exhibitions draw on Harvard's historic collections, and its educational programs for children and adults provide public access to the expertise of the university's research scholars. A forum for thoughtful and informed exchange of ideas, the museum depends on membership to support its activities and its outreach to communities in Cambridge and beyond.

____ I am currently a member of the HMSC

____ I would like to become a member at the following level:

____ \$50 Individual ____ \$85 Household ____ \$200 Sustaining ____ \$500 Patron

Please enclose a separate check payable to the Harvard Museum of Natural History for membership.

Waiver of Liability

I understand that by signing below I am acting for myself and for everyone in my party in acknowledging that the Refund & Cancellation Policy, Wildlife Viewing, Terms & Conditions and Please Note sections in this brochure have been read and accepted. I also understand that I and everyone in my party will be required to sign a release of liability form prior to and/or during my trip. I give my permission for NHA to charge my final balance on my credit card at 90 days prior to departure, unless otherwise noted on this form. I also give my permission for NHA to use any image taken of me or anyone in my party by NHA or its affiliates for promotional purposes.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

PLEASE NOTE: Each participant must sign this waiver.

For more information or to make your reservation on HMNH Polar Bears of Churchill, please call Harvard Alumni Association at 617-496-0806 or email haatravels@harvard.edu.

Please complete this form and mail it to:

Harvard Alumni Travels
124 Mt. Auburn St., 6th floor
Cambridge, MA 02138

Or fax it to: 617-496-4011



Payment Policy

A deposit of \$500 is required to confirm your reservation. Final payment is due 90 days prior to departure, approximately July 16, 2016. Your final payment will be charged to your credit card 90 days prior to departure, unless you indicate otherwise on your reservation form. Please submit a check prior to the final payment due date should you prefer to pay by check.

Refund & Cancellation Policy

All cancellations must be made in writing. Cancellations processed more than 90 days prior to departure will require a \$100 handling fee. Cancellations made 90 to 45 days prior to departure require a loss of 50% of the entire program fee, including all extensions. Cancellations made within 44 days of departure require a loss of the entire program fee, including all extensions. We reserve the right to cancel this tour, and in such case the entire payment will be refunded without penalty or handling fee or any further obligation on our part.



Wildlife Viewing

Because our programs specialize in viewing wildlife, every effort is made to plan programs where wildlife is known to exist. However, the animals we visit live wild and free and we cannot fully predict or control their migratory patterns (nor would we want to). In an attempt to locate wildlife which may have deviated from its normal pattern, or in the interest of traveler comfort or safety, we may be required to make reasonable changes in itineraries. If it is necessary to change hotels or other facilities, comparable accommodations will be substituted wherever possible. If changes or fluctuations in exchange rates occur, additional costs may require the program fee to change with little or no notice. Should Natural Habitat Adventures (NHA) be required to cancel a trip due to unforeseen circumstances, travelers will be refunded for their trip cost, but neither NHA, nor Harvard Museums of Science & Culture (HMSC) will be liable for accompanying expenses (such as gear purchases, airline tickets, etc.).

Health

All participants should be in good health and capable of walking over rough terrain. By forwarding the deposit for passage, the passenger certifies that he/she does not have any physical or other condition or disability that would create a

hazard for him/herself or other passengers.

Currency, Fuel & Other Fluctuations

Significant fluctuations in exchange rates, energy prices and other cost factors may necessitate an increase in trip prices before or after your booking. A price increase would be implemented only if absolutely necessary and would serve only to maintain the highest quality of your adventure.

Terms & Conditions

It is HMSC's, NHA's and our cooperating agents' and representatives' goal to select reliable suppliers and contractors to provide air and other transportation, hotels, guides and other travel-related services; we do not assume responsibility, directly or indirectly, for any loss, damage or injury to property or person in connection with such

services. Each traveler agrees not to hold HMSC, NHA, its owners, employees, agents and representatives liable, in the absence of their own gross negligence, for any loss or injury, expense or damage that results directly or indirectly from any act or omission of any person or firm that is to or does provide goods

or services in connection with the trip or with any available option. You agree that HMSC, NHA and its cooperating agents and representatives shall not be liable for circumstances arising as a result of acts of God, weather, detention, annoyance, delays and expenses arising from quarantine, strikes, theft, pilferage, force majeure, military, political or terrorist action, civil disturbances, government restrictions, failure of any means of conveyance to arrive or depart as scheduled, and discrepancies or changes in transit over which they have no control. NHA reserves the right to change the program fee, dates or itinerary with little or no notice. If such changes do occur, no refunds will be made beyond those described in our cancellation policy, and NHA will not be liable for expenses incurred as a result of the change (such as air ticket change fees, etc.).

Please Note

The information contained in this brochure was prepared well in advance of the departure date. Because of the program provided, dates, pricing, hotels, modes of transportation and in some cases, itineraries, change. If this situation does occur, we will attempt to provide similar alternatives but are not always able to do so. We hope you understand. Please be certain to read Terms & Conditions and Refund & Cancellation Policy prior to signing on to this adventure.

NHA CST # 2066319-40

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